

Duxbury Clipper, Thursday, June 2, 1977

OUT OF THE PAST

By Gershom Bradford

In the 1880's the fishing schooner Christina L was built and launched in Duxbury. She was in no way notable, but her crew made an impact of sorts on the industry at T Wharf in later days. She was skippered by Orson Arnold and among the crew were Charles Grueby, L. B. "Win" Goodspeed, Cassius Hunt with Jabez Hatch as her cook.

Orson Arnold established the firm of Arnold and Winsor, prominent for many years. Hunt founded C. Hunt & Co., much respected for several generations and L. B. Goodspeed & Co. was one of the solid firms of T Wharf. Charles Grueby's son, George, spent his life with that business, becoming a member of the firm.

These merchants were progressive men and in 1897 they began giving orders for the most modern fishing vessels. The first, in 1897, was the Mattakesett, followed by the Massasoit, Samoset, Squanto, Tecumseh and 2 big Grand Bankers called the Moween and Mocanam, all carrying Duxbury on their sterns as their hailing port.

They were designed by the celebrated naval architect McManus, if I am not mistaken. Their bow profile was distinctive: the stem dropped with only a slight rake aft, to a little above the water where it took an abrupt curve to the waterline. For this characteristic they were known as the Indianheaders. So Duxbury made one more splash on the sea.

In 1920, George Grueby arranged for me to make a trip in the big fishing schooner, Dawn, skipper Johnny Atwood. It was a great experience. I had been in ships where there were a lot of shouting orders. No such thing in the Dawn. When the skipper was ready to set the trawls, a big operation all was started by the simple words: "Go ahead, Bill." The whole maneuver went automatically. First, the top starboard dory went over the side and dropped astern, followed by the top port dory and so on alternately until 20 dories were on the sea slowly drifting before the wind, flicking turns of the trawl over as it went along; the line in each tub was about a half mile in length with 500 hooks to a tub. The schooner then moved down to leeward picking up the dories and men, who then had their dinner and a sleep. After the skipper thought the trails were down long enough, the men were dropped at his buoy. If the weather was favorable, the trawls were simply "under run" fish removed and rebaited. Otherwise, the trawls were coiled down in the tubs and brought aboard, together with what fish were caught.

Incentive was the reason for all this efficiency. The men were on shares or lays. When the trip was sold, the vessel took, I believe, 25 percent, the cook \$30 a month besides his lay, the skipper 5 percent and a lay. I believe the matter of gear and ice was arranged by negotiation.

The advent of the beam trawler where the fishermen never left the steam driven vessel, the fish being caught in a great net as she moved along. With this the romance of the dory trawler was in the past.